



Presentation before House Health Policy Committee  
Dr. Dan Spencer, MAC Government Relations Committee  
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Thank you and good morning, Mr. Chair and members of the committee. I thank you for this opportunity to speak with you about the chiropractic profession and our place in the modern health care system. I am Dr. Dan Spencer, a licensed chiropractic physician and the past chair of the Michigan Association of Chiropractors. With over 1,650 members, the Michigan Association of Chiropractors is the voice of the chiropractic profession in Michigan.

Chiropractic Physicians, also known as doctors of chiropractic, chiropractors, or DCs, are licensed health care professionals concerned with the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of neuromusculoskeletal disorders and the effects of these disorders on the nervous system and general health.

Federally, and in Michigan, chiropractors, along with allopathic physicians, osteopathic physicians, and podiatric physicians, are one of the four physician groups that are portal of entry healthcare providers with the ability to diagnose, treat, refer to other physicians, and order tests, imaging, or other treatments from other providers in the health care arena.

Doctors of chiropractic utilize natural and conservative methods of treatment and respect the human body's ability to heal itself. DCs treat the biomechanics, structure, and function of the spine and its effects on the musculoskeletal and nervous systems. We also take into account the role played by the proper function of these systems in the preservation and restoration of health.

Chiropractic came into being as a profession in 1895 with the work of Dr. D.D. Palmer. In the 120 years since then, the chiropractic profession has proved its value both in its efficacy and its cost-effectiveness through the experience of millions of chiropractic patients and a large body of peer-reviewed research. Today, approximately 77,000 chiropractic physicians are practicing in the United States, with roughly another 3,000 working in academic and management roles.

There are 18 nationally accredited chiropractic colleges across the country, providing four-year doctoral graduate school programs. Chiropractic students are trained as primary care chiropractic physicians who will diagnose, treat, or refer patients to other health care providers when necessary.

Over the course of their education, chiropractic students complete a curriculum that includes a minimum of 4,200 hours, although the average is 4,485 hours. This includes classroom and laboratory hours, as well as a one-year clinical internship. Chiropractic students also must pass a four-part national licensing board examination, which includes a practical component, before becoming licensed.

### **Michigan**

Michigan's chiropractic scope of practice reflects the intense education and training a chiropractor undergoes. Part 164 of the Public Health Code defines chiropractic and outlines the scope of practice. It defines chiropractic as that discipline within the healing arts that deals with the human nervous system and the musculoskeletal system and their interrelationship with other body systems.

The Public Health Code also states the practice of chiropractic includes diagnosis of human conditions and disorders of the human musculoskeletal and nervous systems as they relate to subluxations, misalignments, and joint dysfunctions. These diagnoses shall be for the purpose of detecting and correcting those conditions and disorders or offering advice to seek treatment from other health professionals in order to restore and maintain health.

Chiropractic physicians make a diagnosis through the evaluation of conditions or symptoms related to subluxations, misalignments, and joint dysfunction through any of the following:

- Physical examination
- The taking and reviewing of patient health information
- The performance, ordering, or use of tests, and
- The performance, ordering, or use of x-ray

After determining a working diagnosis, the chiropractor treats the patient through:

- The use of chiropractic adjustment of subluxations, misalignments, and joint dysfunction, and
- Physical measures, analytical instruments, nutritional advice, rehabilitative exercise, and adjustment apparatus.

If the patient has a condition that is more appropriately treated by another health care provider, the chiropractic physician has the duty to make a referral.

Michigan's Public Health Code prohibits chiropractic physicians from some acts, including the writing of pharmaceutical prescriptions and the use of any procedure that cuts or punctures the skin.

### **Research Proves It: Chiropractic is Efficient, Effective Care**

One major cost driver in health care is the use of expensive, high-risk treatments for patients suffering from neuromusculoskeletal conditions like back pain, neck pain, and headaches. Invasive interventions such as surgery, spinal injections, prescription drugs, hospital admissions and readmissions, unnecessary diagnostic testing, and follow-up care necessitated by mistakes

and adverse events, are commonly not as effective as more conservative care and cause costs to skyrocket.

There is a growing body of scientific evidence showing that the conservative, no drug or surgery model of health care practiced by chiropractors can lead to considerable cost savings by significantly reducing these major costs drivers, all while improving patient outcomes. This research includes:

**The Blue Cross Blue Shield of Tennessee Study (2010):** Low back pain care initiated with a DC saves 40 percent on health care costs when compared with care initiated through an MD. Allowing DC-initiated episodes of care would have led to an estimated annual cost savings of \$2.3 million. Conclusion: “[I]nsurance companies that restrict access to chiropractic care for LBP may, inadvertently, be paying more for care than they would if they removed these restrictions.”

*“Cost of Care for Common Back Pain Conditions Initiated With Chiropractic Doctor vs. Medical Doctor/Doctor of Osteopathy as First Physician: Experience of One Tennessee-Based General Health Insurer,” JMPT. November-December 2010; 33(9): pgs. 640-643*

**The California Study (2004):** This study concluded that if all members of the examined plan had chiropractic coverage, total health care costs would drop by 12 percent and the plan would save \$47.5 million per year, the result of less utilization of hospital beds, drugs, surgery, x-rays and, most importantly, speedier patient recovery times. Conclusion: Access to managed chiropractic care may reduce overall health rate expenditures.

*“Comparative Analysis of Individuals With and Without Chiropractic Coverage,” Archives of Internal Medicine. October 11, 2004; 164: 1985-1992*

**The Self-Insured Workforce Study (2014):** This study examined the total direct (medical, pharmaceutical) and indirect (lost productivity, absenteeism, workers compensation, short and long-term disability) cost outcomes associated with care for back problems reported by workers at a major self-insured heavy manufacturer in the U.S. Employee patients in the chiropractic group were the least likely to use any of the five most frequently prescribed classes of medications, to receive medically intensive procedures like surgeries, and to record guideline-incongruent use of imaging, medications and procedures. They also averaged significantly lower total costs per episode, even when statistical adjustments were made to improve group comparability.”

*“Tracking Low Back Problems in a Major Self-Insured Workforce,” JOEM. June 2014: 56(6); pgs. 604-620*

**Early Predictors of Lumbar Spine Surgery Study (2013):** This study provided documentation of chiropractic care as a first option for back pain relief and surgical avoidance. The study authors found that there was a very strong association between surgery and first provider seen for the injury, even after adjustment for other important variables. 42.7 percent of workers who first saw a surgeon had surgery, while only 1.5 percent of those who saw a chiropractor had surgery.

*“Early Predictors of Lumbar Spine Surgery after Occupational Back Injury: Results from a Prospective Study of Workers in Washington State,” Spine. 38(11): 953-964. May 15, 2013*

These studies, and many others, demonstrate the great benefits that the chiropractic profession and our conservative care can offer to Michigan's health care system. Chiropractic care provides better results for patients while significantly lowering costs.

We hope that in your coming work, you look upon the Michigan Association of Chiropractors as a resource. If we can provide any information you may need, we will do so to the best of our ability. Thank you for your attention today, and we look forward to working with each of you in the future.